

CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

THE ORDEAL OF LIBERALISM

Objectives

A thorough study of Chapter Thirty-One should enable the student to understand:

1. The new directions of domestic reform manifested by John Kennedy's New Frontier program.
2. The new elements added to Kennedy's program by Lyndon Johnson's Great Society proposals.
3. The reasons why the movement for African American civil rights became increasingly assertive in the 1960s.
4. The significance of Martin Luther King, Jr., to the civil rights movement and the importance of other forces, including the Nation of Islam.
5. The new elements that Kennedy introduced in both the nation's defense strategy and its foreign policy.
6. The background and sequence of events leading to the Cuban missile crisis.
7. How the United States became committed to defending the government in the southern part of Vietnam and the reasons why United States involvement in Vietnam changed both quantitatively and qualitatively in 1965.
8. The reasons why the 1968 Tet offensive had such a critical impact on both policy toward Vietnam and American domestic politics.

Main Themes

1. How Lyndon Johnson used the legacy of John Kennedy plus his own political skill to erect his Great Society and fight the war on poverty with programs for health, education, job training, and urban development.
2. How the civil rights movement finally generated enough sympathy among whites to accomplish the legal end of segregation, but the persistence of racism gave rise to the black power philosophy and left many problems unsolved.
3. How containment and United States preoccupation with communism led the nation to use military force against leftist nationalist movements in Cuba, the Dominican Republic, and, most disastrously, Vietnam.

Chronology of the War in Indochina

Because American involvement in Indochina stretched from the 1940s through the 1970s, the material is in several chapters. This chronology will help you see the entire span of the Vietnam War.

- 1945–1954 Ho Chi Minh led fight against French colonialism
- 1950 United States was paying for most of the French effort
- 1954 French defeated at Dien Bien Phu
 - Geneva Conference partitioned Indochina
- 1956 President Diem refused to hold reunification elections
- 1959 National Liberation Front (NLF) (Viet Cong) organized
 - About 650 American advisers in South Vietnam

- 1963 Diem deposed and killed
About 15,000 American advisers in South Vietnam
- 1964 Gulf of Tonkin Resolution passed
- 1965 Thieu government established
American bombing of North Vietnam began
180,000 American troops in Vietnam
- 1966 Fulbright hearings began
300,000 American troops in Vietnam
- 1967 Major antiwar protests began
500,000 American troops in Vietnam
- 1968 January Tet offense
March Johnson announced bombing pause and his withdrawal from the presidential race
- 1969 American troop strength peaked at 540,000
- 1970 May Cambodia invaded
Kent State and Jackson State incidents
December Gulf of Tonkin Resolution repealed
- 1971 Pentagon papers released
- 1972 Spring Hanoi and Haiphong bombed
Fall American troop strength down to 60,000
December "Christmas bombings"
- 1973 Cease-fire; Paris accords
- 1975 Vietnam unified by North Vietnam's victory
- 1978 Vietnam invaded Cambodia
China invaded Vietnam

Glossary

1. **fiscal and monetary policy**: The practice of influencing the economy through manipulation of government spending (fiscal) and the money supply (monetary).
2. **affirmative action**: The policy of making a special effort to provide jobs, college admission, or other benefits to members of a group that was previously discriminated against, such as blacks or women.

Pertinent Questions

EXPANDING THE LIBERAL STATE (832-836)

1. Describe John F. Kennedy's background and his conception of the role of the president. How did his New Frontier fare?
2. How did Lyndon Johnson differ from Kennedy in personality and in ability to influence Congress? What did he call his program?
3. What were the purposes of Medicare and Medicaid? What limits and what problems kept government health programs controversial?
4. What agency was the "centerpiece" of Johnson's "war on poverty"? How successful was the war at reducing poverty?

5. Who opposed federal aid to education? How did Johnson's legislation manage to circumvent much of the opposition?
6. How did the Immigration Act of 1965 change the characteristics of migration to the United States?
7. How did the effort to fund both the Great Society and a great military establishment affect the federal budget? What was the effect on the nation's poverty rate?

THE BATTLE FOR RACIAL EQUALITY (836-841)

8. Describe the events of 1960 to 1963 that brought the civil rights movement to the forefront of national attention. How did President Kennedy respond to increasing black activism and southern white resistance?
9. What were the results of "freedom summer" and the Selma march?
10. Describe the shift in black population that had occurred by the mid-1960s. What implications did this shift have on the nature of the civil rights movement?
11. Describe the race riots of 1964 to 1967, indicating which was the first major one and which was the largest. What reasons for the riots and what appropriate response to them did the Commission on Civil Disorder suggest? How did many white Americans react to the disorder?
12. What did "black power" mean? What impact did it have on the civil rights movement and on the attitudes of American blacks in general?

"FLEXIBLE RESPONSE" AND THE COLD WAR (841-843)

13. What did Kennedy do to provide the United States with a more flexible response capability?
14. What were the purpose and the result of the Bay of Pigs invasion?
15. What precipitated the Cuban Missile crisis? How was it resolved and how did it shape future Soviet policy?
16. Why did Lyndon Johnson send troops to the Dominican Republic? Was the action reminiscent of the interventions in the days of the Roosevelt corollary?

THE AGONY OF VIETNAM (843-852)

17. How did the United States end up supporting the French in the First Indochina War? Was it the correct decision? What was the result? (See also chapter 30, p. 826.)
18. Describe the cultural and economic differences between the northern and southern parts of Vietnam. How did these differences shape the conflict between the two?
19. Why did Ngo Dinh Diem, with U.S. support, refuse to hold the 1956 reunification elections called for by the Geneva accords?
20. What were President Ngo Dinh Diem's political problems and what led to his demise?
21. What assumptions and advice led Lyndon Johnson to his major commitment to aid the government in southern Vietnam? What incident did he use to give the war an appearance of legality?
22. Recount Johnson's escalation of the Vietnam War. Why were the American strategies of "attrition" and "pacification" unable to achieve victory? What kept Johnson from expanding American action even further?
23. Why does the text refer to the Vietnam War in the mid 1960s as a "quagmire"? Why did the "hearts and minds" strategy fail?
24. Where did opposition to the war originate? How did it spread?

THE TRAUMAS OF 1968 (852-856)

25. What effect did the Tet offensive have on American public opinion concerning the war and on the course of the 1968 presidential election?
26. How did the nation respond to the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr.?
27. How did conservative Americans respond to such events as race riots, antiwar demonstrations, and the assassinations of Robert Kennedy and King? How did Richard Nixon capitalize on these anxieties? What other politician tried to ride such feelings to the White House?

WHERE HISTORIANS DISAGREE: THE VIETNAM COMMITMENT (846-847)

28. What has the work of historians revealed about the motives, assumptions, and decisions that led to prolonged American involvement in Indochina? How might events have been different if John F. Kennedy had not been assassinated.

PATTERNS OF POPULAR CULTURE: THE FOLK MUSIC REVIVAL (PP. 850-851)

29. Why did the message of folk music, "that there is a 'real' America rooted in values of sharing and community," exert such a strong appeal to many American youths in the 1960s?

AMERICA IN THE WORLD: 1968 (854-855)

30. Compare and contrast the events of 1968 in the U. S. with those in other countries. What two factors combined to create fertile ground for disruptions?

Identification

Identify each of the following, and explain why it is important within the context of the chapter.

1. Richard Nixon
2. Lee Harvey Oswald
3. Warren Commission
4. Barry Goldwater
5. Robert Weaver
6. sit-in
7. Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC)
8. Congress of Racial Equality (CORE)
9. Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC)
10. George Wallace
11. "affirmative action"
12. "I have a dream"
13. de jure and de facto segregation
14. Black Panthers
15. Malcolm X
16. Green Berets
17. "Alliance for Progress"
18. Agency for International Development (AID)
19. Peace Corps
20. Berlin Wall
21. Nikita Khrushchev

22. Ho Chi Minh
23. Viet Cong/National Liberation Front (NLF)
24. Dean Rusk
25. Robert McNamara
26. Gulf of Tonkin Resolution
27. Ho Chi Minh Trail
28. Eugene McCarthy
29. Hubert Humphrey
30. "silent majority"/"middle America"

Document 1

Read the sections of Chapter Thirty-One that deal with the war in Vietnam. (Also review the relevant parts of earlier chapters.) The first selection is from a speech given by President Lyndon Johnson on April 7, 1965, at Johns Hopkins University. The second selection was written in the early 1960s by a staff member of the Defense Department. It was prepared for the historical analysis section of the classified report that became known as the Pentagon Papers after it was leaked to the press in 1971. Consider the following questions: Which was more accurate—Johnson's public declaration of South Vietnam as a "small and brave nation" or the Pentagon Papers' characterization of it as "the creation of the United States"? Should the war in Vietnam be portrayed principally as a civil war or as a response to aggression? Despite the obvious difference in rhetoric and candor, do the two documents really differ on the question "Why are we in South Vietnam?"

Why are we in South Vietnam? We are there because we have a promise to keep. Since 1954 every American President has offered to support the people of South Vietnam. We have helped to build and we have helped to defend. Thus, over many years, we have made a national pledge to help South Vietnam defend its independence. I intend to keep our promise. To dishonor that pledge, to abandon this small and brave nation to its enemy—and to the terror that must follow—would be an unforgivable wrong. We are there to strengthen world order. Around the globe—from Berlin to Thailand—are people whose well-being rests, in part, on the belief they can count on us if they are attacked. To leave Vietnam to its fate would shake the confidence of all these people in the value of American commitment. The result would be increased unrest and instability, or even war.

Lyndon Johnson, Speech at Johns Hopkins University, April 7, 1965.

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HISTORICAL ANALYSIS: The Special American Commitment to Vietnam

Finally, in this review of factors that would affect policy-making in Vietnam, we must note that South Vietnam (unlike any of the other countries in Southeast Asia) was essentially the creation of the United States.

Without U.S. support Diem almost certainly could not have consolidated his hold on the South during 1955 and 1956.

Without the threat of U.S. intervention, South Vietnam could not have refused to even discuss the elections called for in 1956 under the Geneva settlement without being immediately overrun by the Viet Minh armies.

Without U.S. aid in the years following, the Diem regime certainly, and an independent South Vietnam almost as certainly, could not have survived.

Document 2

Read the section of the chapter under the heading "Urban Violence." The document below is drawn from the 1967 report of the National Commission on Civil Disorders, often called the Kerner Commission because it was headed by Governor Otto Kerner of Illinois. Consider the following questions: Why did the riots come at a time when blacks were making legal gains? How would conservative whites react to the commission's findings? What traditional American values does the report affront? What values does it affirm? Almost thirty years later, how close is America to realizing the vision of the Kerner Commission? Does the elimination of racism remain "the major unfinished business of this nation"?

This is our basic conclusion: Our nation is moving toward two societies, one black, one white—separate and unequal.

Reaction to last summer's disorders has quickened the movement and deepened the division. Discrimination and segregation have long permeated much of American life; they now threaten the future of every American.

This deepening racial division is not inevitable. The movement apart can be reversed. Choice is still possible. Our principal task is to define that choice and to press for a national resolution.

To pursue our present course will involve the continuing polarization of the American community and, ultimately, the destruction of basic democratic values.

The alternative is not blind repression or capitulation to lawlessness. It is the realization of common opportunities for all within a single society.

This alternative will require a commitment to national action—compassionate, massive and sustained, backed by the resources of the most powerful and the richest nation on this earth. From every American it will require new attitudes, new understanding, and, above all, new will.

The vital needs of the nation must be met; hard choices must be made, and, if necessary, new taxes enacted.

Violence cannot build a better society. Disruption and disorder nourish repression, not justice. They strike at the freedom of every citizen. The community cannot—it will not—tolerate coercion and mob rule.

Violence and destruction must be ended—in the streets of the ghetto and in the lives of people.

Segregation and poverty have created in the racial ghetto a destructive environment totally unknown to most white Americans.

What white Americans have never fully understood—but what the Negro can never forget—is that white society is deeply implicated in the ghetto. White institutions created it, white institutions maintain it, and white society condones it.

It is time now to turn with all the purpose at our command to the major unfinished business of this nation. It is time to adopt strategies for action that will produce quick and visible progress. It is time to make good the promises of American democracy to all citizens—urban and rural, white and black, Spanish-surname, American Indian, and every minority group.

National Commission on Civil Disorders, 1967.

Map Exercise

Fill in or identify the following on the blank map provided.

1. All countries.
2. Mekong Delta and Gulf of Tonkin.
3. Hanoi, Saigon, Haiphong, Phnom Penh, and Bangkok.
4. DMZ.



Interpretative Questions

Based on what you have filled in, answer the following. On some of the questions you will need to consult the narrative in your text for information or explanation.

1. Why did the United States oppose independence for Vietnam after World War II and get dragged into the conflicts in Indochina? How did Vietnam get temporarily divided?
2. From what internal and external sources did the Viet Cong receive their support? How did this make them so difficult to defeat?
3. What trap of competing factors kept Lyndon Johnson from either withdrawing or further escalating the war? How did the geographic position of Indochina in relation to China affect this trap?

Summary

The 1960s began with John F. Kennedy squeezing out one of the narrowest presidential victories in United States history. Three years later, he was dead, and it was up to Lyndon Johnson to carry through his liberal legacy. The first three years of Johnson's presidency were legislatively one of the most productive periods ever, as Congress passed many of the civil rights, health, education, and welfare measures of the Great Society. In 1961, the nation bungled an attempt to dislodge Castro from Cuba, and a year and a half later, the world came to the brink of nuclear war during the Cuban missile crisis. By the latter half of the decade, the foreign policy focus had moved halfway around the world. By the end of 1967, the United States had 500,000 troops in Southeast Asia, and the Vietnam War had become the central issue of American politics. The election year of 1968 was one of the most turbulent times in the nation's history.

Review Questions

These questions are to be answered with essays. This will allow you to explore relationships between individuals, events, and attitudes of the period under review.

1. What were the central elements of the New Frontier and the Great Society? Why was Johnson able to succeed where Kennedy had failed? What were the long-term results of the liberal legislation of 1964 to 1966?
2. How did the reaction of many southern whites to the civil rights activities ironically serve to help the blacks' cause? How did blacks respond when it became clear that the legislative victories of 1964 and 1965 were not enough to satisfy their aspirations?
3. What was the heart of the problem in Vietnam that made military victory so difficult, if not impossible? Who seemed to understand this problem better—the Johnson administration or its critics? How was the Johnson administration trapped by the war?

Chapter Self Test

After you have read the chapter in the text and done the exercises in the Study Guide, take the following self test to see if you understand the material you have covered. Answers appear at the end of the Study Guide.

MULTIPLE-CHOICE QUESTIONS

Circle the letter of the response that best answers the question or completes the statement.

1. John F. Kennedy made an attractive presidential candidate in 1960 for all the following reasons *except* his:
 - a. family wealth and prestige.
 - b. past accomplishments as a handsome war hero.
 - c. personal eloquence, wit, and charisma.
 - d. promise to keep the nation on the course of the 1950s.
2. In contrast to Kennedy, President Lyndon B. Johnson:
 - a. rejected the concept of dynamic governmental activism.
 - b. possessed a shy and reticent personality.
 - c. displayed remarkable skill in influencing Congress.
 - d. sympathized with Southern conservatives on civil rights issues.
3. Lyndon B. Johnson billed his domestic program as the:
 - a. Great Society.
 - b. New Frontier.
 - c. Era of Equality.
 - d. Alliance for Progress.
4. A significant reason that the Medicare proposal was able to overcome opposition and win congressional approval was because it:
 - a. made benefits available to all elderly Americans, regardless of economic need.
 - b. strictly regulated the fee structure of doctors and hospitals.
 - c. established annual spending ceilings to be set by a panel of health-care professionals and economists.
 - d. shifted responsibility for paying a large proportion of medical charges from the government to the patient.
5. The “centerpiece” of Lyndon Johnson’s “war on poverty” was the:
 - a. Department of Family Services, with an emphasis on social work.
 - b. Children’s Relief Fund, with an emphasis on preschooling.
 - c. Office of Economic Opportunity, with an emphasis on community action.
 - d. Agency for Economic Advancement, with an emphasis on job training.
6. Robert Weaver was significant as the:
 - a. architect of the war on poverty.
 - b. leader of conservative opposition to the welfare state.
 - c. author of *The Other America*.
 - d. the first African American cabinet member.

7. Civil rights activists traveled through the South on buses to protest segregation in seating on buses and in depots. These efforts were generally called:
 - a. "rolling sit-ins."
 - b. "freedom rides."
 - c. "Greyhound diplomacy."
 - d. "marches on wheels."
8. Martin Luther King, Jr., delivered his famous "I have a dream" speech:
 - a. while he was in jail in Birmingham, Alabama.
 - b. on the river bridge on the edge of downtown Selma, Alabama.
 - c. at the Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta.
 - d. in front of the Lincoln Memorial as part of a march on Washington.
9. Which of the following best characterizes the level of violence associated with the civil rights activities in the South from 1960 to 1965?
 - a. There was virtually no violence, thanks mainly to Martin Luther King, Jr.'s passive-resistance philosophy.
 - b. White law enforcement officials beat demonstrators or condoned beatings on numerous occasions and several activists were murdered.
 - c. More radical black power advocates captured the movement and assassinated several white officeholders.
 - d. Major riots broke out in the larger southern cities when blacks were turned away from the polls.
10. Malcolm X was a leading member of the:
 - a. Black Panthers.
 - b. Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC).
 - c. Nation of Islam (Black Muslims).
 - d. Pan African Congress (PAC).
11. In response to urban racial violence, in 1968 the special Commission on Civil Disorders appointed by President Johnson recommended:
 - a. massive spending on social problems in the ghettos.
 - b. the elimination of state government involvement in welfare programs.
 - c. slowing the pace of racial change to allow the nation a "cooling-off" period.
 - d. a return to segregated housing patterns to lessen the emotional outbursts that sparked violence in mixed neighborhoods.
12. The first major race riot of the mid-1960s occurred in the Watts section of what major city?
 - a. New York
 - b. Los Angeles
 - c. Detroit
 - d. Atlanta

13. The most important and lasting impact of the black power movement was the:
- stress on the ideal of interracial cooperation rather than self-reliance.
 - unification of previously feuding black political groups.
 - instilling of racial pride and identity in black Americans.
 - reduced emphasis on the importance of African heritage and an emphasis on blacks' rightful place in American history.
14. John Kennedy's "Alliance for Progress" was intended to provide:
- mutual reduction of missiles and warheads by the United States and the Soviet Union.
 - additional aid to the pro-American forces in South Vietnam.
 - young American volunteers to work in health and education facilities in developing nations.
 - better relations between the United States and the nations of Latin America.
15. In the aftermath of the Cuban missile crisis:
- Kennedy traveled to Vienna for his first meeting with the Soviet premier.
 - the Soviets ordered construction of the Berlin Wall to stop the exodus of East Germans.
 - a large CIA-trained army of anti-Castro Cubans unsuccessfully invaded the island.
 - both sides realized how close they had come to the brink, and tensions eased somewhat and a nuclear test ban treaty was signed.
16. Ngo Dinh Diem was probably an unfortunate choice as the basis of American hopes for creation of a viable noncommunist regime in the southern part of Vietnam because he:
- resisted serious political or economic reforms.
 - failed to attract the support of the upper class in Saigon.
 - was too willing to appease the Viet Cong.
 - persecuted the nation's Roman Catholics.
17. The Gulf of Tonkin Resolution:
- aroused strong opposition and a lengthy debate in Congress before being narrowly passed.
 - limited President Johnson to a one-time retaliatory bombing strike on the northern part of Vietnam.
 - was claimed by President Johnson as legal authorization for the military escalation of the U.S. role in the conflict.
 - marked the beginning of significant international support for the American response to communist aggression in Indochina.
18. By the end of 1967, the United States war efforts in Vietnam:
- had effectively reduced to a trickle the flow of communist soldiers and supplies in the southern part of Vietnam by intensive bombings of the north.
 - involved roughly a half-million American military personnel in the war region.
 - had succeeded in establishing an honest and efficient, if weak, government in South Vietnam.
 - involved all of the above.

19. The American military forces in Vietnam seemed least capable of:
 - a. winning a military victory in the major battles in which it became engaged.
 - b. removing the Viet Cong and their Vietnamese allies from the north from such strongholds as Khesahn.
 - c. sustaining a favorable "kill ratio."
 - d. pacifying a captured region by winning "the hearts and minds" of the Vietnamese people.
20. In the 1968 presidential election, George Wallace enjoyed an unusually high degree of support for a third-party candidate because he argued that:
 - a. the United States should immediately end its military involvement in Vietnam.
 - b. the movement toward racial equality should be accelerated through "affirmative action" programs.
 - c. programs to alleviate poverty should be fully funded by Congress and that defense spending should be cut sharply to get the money.
 - d. busing of school children for racial integration, expanding government regulations and social programs, and soft treatment of rioters and demonstrators were destroying America.

TRUE-FALSE QUESTIONS

Read the statement carefully. Mark true statements "T" and false statements "F."

1. Richard Nixon, vice president to Dwight Eisenhower, was John F. Kennedy's Republican opponent in 1960.
2. President Kennedy supported the Army's Green Berets because the force could fight smaller, nontraditional wars.
3. The Peace Corps was composed of trained diplomats and negotiators that could be quickly dispatched to worldwide trouble spots to try to avoid war.
4. The Warren Commission on the assassination of President Kennedy concluded that Lee Harvey Oswald had acted alone.
5. Barry Goldwater was the last moderate to liberal candidate to be nominated for President by the Republican party.
6. Medicare paid medical expenses for elderly Americans, regardless of income, and Medicaid provided medical benefits to welfare recipients, regardless of age.
7. The Immigration Act of 1965 eliminated the national origins system that had favored northern European immigrants.
8. Despite Johnson's "war on poverty," the rate of poverty actually increased in the 1960s.
9. The "freedom summer" efforts and the Selma march concentrated on voting-rights issues.
10. The term "*de jure* segregation" referred to racial segregation required by law, whereas "*de facto* segregation" referred to separation by practice not directly mandated by law.
11. Lyndon Johnson lost much of the support that he had previously enjoyed from blacks when he refused to endorse the concept of "affirmative action."
12. The U.S. government refused to give any support for the preparation of the band of Cuban exiles who planned to mount the Bay of Pigs invasion against Castro.
13. The Immigration Act of 1965 was designed to stem the flow of Asians and African immigrants who allegedly took jobs from native Americans.

14. In the immediate post–World War II period, there was a major exodus of black population from the industrial cities of the Northeast back to the South because of urban riots and the loss of wartime jobs.
15. Malcolm X stressed that African Americans should band together and stress their racial pride through their Christian churches.
16. The Berlin Wall was erected in 1961 to prevent East Germans from fleeing to the West.
17. The “Ho Chi Minh Trail” was the nickname given to the supply routes that moved soldiers and material from the North part of Vietnam into the South during the Second Indochina War.
18. The Tet offensive by the Viet Cong helped turn American opinion against the war in Vietnam even though the United States and allied Vietnamese forces repelled the invasion and inflicted serious losses on the Viet Cong.
19. Despite Martin Luther King, Jr.’s nonviolent philosophy, there were several riots and violent disturbances following his assassination.
20. Richard Nixon won the presidency in 1968 at least partly by appealing to the so-called “silent majority” of “middle Americans.”